

# In the Spotlight!

Missouri State Employees Building a Brighter Tomorrow

The Employee Recognition Website for Missouri State Employees

Issue #3 CY2014

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# Newspaper

E D I T I O N

## Welcome to the Newspaper Edition of *In the Spotlight*!

If this is the first time you're learning about *In the Spotlight* we're glad to have you with us. If you haven't heard, *In the Spotlight* is a website that showcases the accomplishments of Missouri state employees at work, in local Missouri communities and beyond our borders.

Through the website, visitors can learn about the great work and accomplishments of state employees through words, pictures and videos—from employees themselves—and from state executives who are proud of them too.

The Division of Personnel oversees the website and publishes this Newspaper as a way to recap some of the recent additions to the website, and to further explain how the website works. In the Newspaper, you also meet a few other state employees in a special NINE QUESTIONS feature section to learn more about the great work they are doing too.

In the coming weeks, we will be contacting state agencies to learn more about the wide variety of challenges and successes all state employees are involved in. It will be time well spent—because as state employees, we all have an enriching story to share. Maybe we'll hear from you!

Enjoy this issue of the Newspaper and visit the website at:

<http://spotlight.mo.gov/>

**All that's missing is YOU!**

Do you know an outstanding employee who should be "In the Spotlight?" Is that person you?

**Share your VOICE**

If you have a GREAT WORK or GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENT story to share through VIDEO. Let us know. It could end up in one of several SPECIAL *In the Spotlight!* marquees.

**TAKE A picture** It lasts longer!

If you have a photo of an employee doing GREAT WORK on a project or interacting positively with the public, send us the photo with a one sentence explanation of *Who, What, When and Where*. It may end up *In the Spotlight!*



"When you explore the website, you will learn about some of the exciting things state employees are doing, and you can see and listen to other employees and executives talk about what makes state government – and their employees – so special. It's no cliché to say that we all play an important role in our agency and work team. We should be proud of what we do and show that pride whenever we can. That's important to everyone in the Division of Personnel, and I'm sure that's true for your agency too."

Nancy Johnston  
Director, Division of Personnel

# In the Spotlight!

Missouri State Employees Building a Brighter Tomorrow

IN THE SPOTLIGHT! PROVIDES A FUN AND DYNAMIC WAY TO:

- Share noteworthy employee achievements.
- Use video to “spotlight” employees who want to be “seen and heard” talking about their accomplishments and the factors that motivate them to do their best each day.
- Share pictures of employees doing great work in their agency or community.
- Meet state leaders who proudly explain “What defines great work and great employees” in their agency.

## Inspiration

Items that qualify for *In the Spotlight!* include, but are not limited to:

- Educational accomplishments (other than certificates for attending a class or workshop)
- Civic awards
- Election to a professional association
- Unique volunteer accomplishments
- Heroic acts
- Special on-the-job accomplishments
- Missouri Relies on Everyone (MoRE) State Employee Suggestion Program awards
- Governor’s Award for Quality and Productivity
- State Employee of the Month
- Career Advancements/Accomplishments
- Missouri State Employee Award of Distinction
- Military awards/honors

## SUBMITTING INFO

Active (current) state employees who would like to submit their accomplishment, or an accomplishment of a co-worker to In the Spotlight! can use the [online form](#).

When the form is submitted, it will go to the Public Information Officer or other designated contact in the employee’s agency for review—primarily to make sure the employee’s agency knows about their accomplishment too.

In most cases, once that is done, the information will be sent to the Center for Management and Professional Development (Center) in the Division of Personnel to post on *In the Spotlight!*

In some instances, the Center may contact the employee who made the submission to see if he or she would like to provide a video feature on the accomplishment. However, employees are under no obligation to appear on video for *In the Spotlight!*



## What inspires me to do GREAT work?

Taken from an *In the Spotlight!* Video Segment

### Angela Cullifer

Adult Protective Community Worker  
Senior and Disability Services  
Department of Health and Senior Services

“The elderly and disabled population that we serve doesn’t always have a voice. And a lot of times they are the forgotten people. I feel like they need a voice and need someone to look out for them, and to protect them. That’s what gives me my motivation...because they don’t always have somebody to speak for them.

The job that I do, and that our whole division does really matters and does make a difference in the lives of the people we serve.”

See and hear more employees talking about what inspires them at:

<http://spotlight.mo.gov/a-brighter-tomorrow/>

IN THE SPOTLIGHT! NEWSPAPER IS PUBLISHED BY:

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STATE OF MISSOURI  
**Center** FOR  
MANAGEMENT AND  
Professional Development

“We inspire current and potential leaders on their journey to excellence.”



# 9/Q

## NINE QUESTIONS WITH... SOS Employee Sarah Irwin

Sarah Irwin is an Outreach and Training Librarian with the **Missouri State Library Reference Services Division** in the Office of the Secretary of State. The division provides information and research services – books, articles, ebooks and more, at no cost to Missouri state government employees.

### What is the best part of your job?

The best part of my job is working with state government employees. As the trainer for my division, I get to provide library resource classes for all the hardworking state employees who are researching subjects like water quality, mental health services, children's education, citizen safety, disease prevention and wildlife biology. I am so fortunate to have learned about the good work employees do for the citizens of this state, and glad that I am able to share with them that they have a partner in their quest for quality information to help improve the lives of Missourians.

### When do you feel most effective at work?

I feel effective when I know the work I'm doing directly supports the mission of my division, and that those mission-driven activities are understood and supported by everyone involved. Luckily, the Reference Services team is extremely supportive. We all care about the work we do for our patrons and respect the skills each team member brings to the table.

### What motivates you to do GREAT work?

I work with a fantastic team, and I feel like the services we provide are the best kept secret in state government. My central motivation each day is to share that secret!

### What is your proudest accomplishment, either at work or at home?

I am proud of many things – the work I do, my network of family and friends – but I'm most proud of the partnership I've created with my husband. We started dating when I was eighteen, got married right out of college, and in our first year of marriage found ourselves both in graduate school, working two jobs each. Through tight schedules, tight budgets and life's occasional hard knocks, we've worked, learned and grown together. We share everything (though he does more than his fair share of housework!), and I'm proud of our almost ten years of marriage and of the life we've created for ourselves.

### Who do you most admire?

My parents. My mom is amazing – selfless, faithful, curious, nature-loving and patient. She can see multiple sides of issues without judging, and she is constantly looking for new things to learn, new passions to pursue, new ways to serve her fellow man, all while recognizing the humor and grace in life. My dad is one of a kind, brilliant and down-to-earth, the type who has never known a stranger and never wavers from the goodness that is at the core of his every action and motivation. I am so very thankful to have had such remarkable people raise me, and to be able to continue to learn from them.

### If you could make one change in the world, what would it be?

Tolerance – and greater kindness. I think humankind shares so many of the same worries and joys, and the differences that might seem insurmountable when you look at someone in the abstract often melt away when you get to know the person. We can all be kinder and more respectful of ourselves and one another.

### If you could recognize one person for the GREAT work they have done, who would it be and why?

I would recognize my whole team in Reference Services – Tom Leimkuehler, Annie Moots, Frances Rouse, Laura Kromer, and our MoDOT librarian, Renée McHenry. They work extremely hard; connecting thousands of Missouri state employees with an ever-expanding pool of millions of print and online sources is a big job for six people. Most state employees do not have libraries or research sources provided at the department or agency level, so as an established library with statewide and global partners, we know we're the best, cheapest, and often only connection to the information state employees need to do their work. My team members are respectful of state employees' tasks and time, and provide assistance with a generous spirit. I admire each of them so much.

### What would you like the general public to know about the state employees you work closely with each day?

This is such an important question. I've covered how dedicated my team is, but beyond that, they are also giving, warm and wonderful people. I also often interact with the devoted teams of the other two divisions of the State Library - Library Development and Wolfner Library. Wolfner provides free library services to the visually impaired in Missouri – over 11,000 Missourians are served by this service! Library Development works with public libraries, administering grants, conducting surveys, overseeing statewide digitization projects and providing continuing education. The staff members in these divisions truly care about their work and go above and beyond every day.

### How would you like to be remembered by your peers, co-workers and customers?


I hope that when my service to the State Library has come to a close, my co-workers will remember me as a caring teammate, and that our library patrons will know that helping them help Missourians was a pleasure and a privilege.



#### PHOTOS

Sarah Irwin;  
Wedding Day;  
A favorite photo with brothers and parents;  
Halfway up Mount Rainer in Seattle





# Do you know what your best work “sounds” like?

From an article by Dr. Nina Burrows

Want to streamline your focus about work and career. Borrowing a simple metaphor from the arts can help.

What would the equivalent of a symphony be for the work you’re doing today?

What would the outcome be if you consistently strived to do your best at work every day?

While my work can often be technical, I try to see myself not as a technician, but rather as a craftsperson. For me there is an important distinction between the two. A technician can use their tools to a high standard, but the craftsperson's relationship with their work seems just a little deeper.

A craftsperson has a **process**, a **philosophy**. They don't just know how to produce good work, they also know why. They don't just use tools, they create them. They don't just produce something to someone else's specification. They produce their work as an end in itself.

My work is motivated by an idea that is borrowed from music—I want to know what my “work” symphony would sound like.

In reality, if I was to write an actual symphony I imagine it would sound terrible. I have no musical talent at all. But what would the equivalent of a symphony be for me in relation to the work I do? What would the outcome be if I always strived to do my best work?

**The symphony isn't just a useful way of helping me explore my own ability. The symphony also helps me look at my work through a long lens.**

It encourages me to look at my career as a whole, and to consider what I want to achieve over the next 10 years, rather than just the next 10 months. We live in a fast-paced world, so it can be easy to spend your years jumping from one project to another.

But the idea of creating a symphony forces me to think long term. What could I achieve if I gave myself time to achieve it?

Thinking about symphonies also encourages me to look at my work as an entire body of work. A symphony is made up of separate movements that are designed to go together from the beginning. The movements are distinctive, but the symphony brings these movements together as a coherent whole. The sheer scale of the project means that the composer is able to explore a variety of different themes, yet keep them all together as part of the musical journey. It's in this coherence that the composer is able to take their work to an even higher level.

If I begin to look at my work as a total body of work, and if I borrow from art and consider what a retrospective of my efforts could look like in the years to come, it helps me search for the coherence that might otherwise go undefined and unexplored.

Symphonies also sit wonderfully with another theme that recurs in most everyone's work – **process**. If you were to take the greatest symphony ever written, collect all of the notes, and then play all of these notes at the same time, it would be hard to distinguish one note from another. A symphony, however, is a process, and all the different notes need to be played in their own time. The composer takes you on a carefully crafted journey. A journey filled with experiences that are unique in and of themselves. This is the perfect metaphor for the career I want for myself.

How about you?

**Dr Nina Burrows** is a psychologist who helps people understand psychology using illustrated books and talks. Used with permission.



# 9/Q NINE QUESTIONS WITH...

## Tim Decker

Director, Children's Division, Department of Social Services

Tim has served for 29 years in a variety of leadership positions with the Missouri Department of Social Services. He was appointed as the Director of the Missouri Division of Youth Services in January 2007 and transitioned to Director of the Missouri Children's Division in November 2013. Tim was born and raised in St. Louis County and earned his degree in Social Work and Psychology in 1982 from Park University in Parkville, Missouri. Tim is married to Laurie Decker, a former special education teacher who now volunteers as a youth minister and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for abused and neglected children. Tim and his wife Laurie raised their children in the Kansas City area before moving Central Missouri.

### What is the best part of your job?

Working with so many great staff and partners who are passionate about the safety and well-being of children. Serving as director provides the opportunity to make system improvements that really make a difference and will positively impact people lives for years to come.

### When do you feel most effective at work?

When I have the opportunity to walk in the shoes of front-line social workers, youth, and families and understand the opportunities and challenges on a first-hand basis. This allows me to passionately promote the vision and mission, identify innovative solutions, and facilitate staff, families, policy-makers and partners coming together to transform the system for the better.

### What motivates you to do GREAT work?

I see the work as more than a job, it is a mission and calling. It is such a blessing to have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. I try to always remember that we are serving a greater purpose and I assess progress over the long-term versus getting discouraged by the day-to-day struggles.

### What is your proudest accomplishment at work or at home?

Participating in the Harvard Innovations in American Government Award competition in 2008 as DYS Director. By winning the award young people, families, staff, and partners involved in DYS challenged others to see young people and families in the juvenile justice system differently and increase expectations for what could be accomplished. DYS believes that all people want to do well and succeed and they proved it by increasing education completion rates by over 87%, promoting college and career, and engaging families as partners.

### Who do you most admire?

Both my father and mother, each for different reasons. My father for teaching me to have a strong work ethic and treat others with kindness and respect. My mother for teaching me how to relate to others, organize people, and get involved in the community.

### If you could make one change in the world, what would it be?

I would create more understanding and connection between people from diverse backgrounds. We are all very special and unique, and have more in common than we know.

### If you could recognize one person for the GREAT work they have done, who would it be and why?

The Children's Division State Youth Advisory Board. The young people on the board are energetic, insightful, courageous, and passionate about making a difference in the lives of others.

### What would you like the general public to know about the state employees you work closely with each day?

The state employees I work with each day are caring and resourceful people who are courageous and willing to make sacrifices on behalf of others. They are the state's first responders to child abuse and neglect and work hard every day to protect and ensure loving permanent families for our state's most vulnerable children.

### How would you like to be remembered by your peers, co-workers and customers?

A passionate and courageous leader who taught, listened, learned, inspired, and lived the mission.

#### PHOTOS:

Tim Decker;  
Speaking to employees during a division meeting;  
Participating in a Child Abuse Prevention Month  
gathering in Eastern Jackson County





# If you haven't visited the **Spotlight Blog** to read about recent employee accomplishments Here's some of what you missed!

In addition to a portion of the employee's blog, we also asked each employee included here to answer the question:  
*"How do the people in your agency and your work team help you in your effort to serve Missouri citizens?"*



## DESE's **Deborah Sanderson** Brings Creativity and Determination to Students at Mapaville School

For 35 years, Deborah Sanderson has worked as a teacher with the Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education's Mapaville School for the Severely Disabled. She always extends a warm welcome and open arms to her students no matter the challenge. The changes to students under Debbie's direction is amazing. For example, a few years ago Deborah had a student in her classroom that would likely never walk. Deborah's creativity and patience in working with this student brought determination to the point this student is now walking with minimal guidance. This is just one story of many that shows the triumphs and hurdles the students overcome. Because of Deborah's creativity, patience, determination, structure, and consistency she deserves to be recognized for her many years of hard work and service to the students at Mapaville.

*"The in-service trainings available to me over the years have been a great help in providing the best education for my students. The classroom staff (teacher aides) I've had are a great asset. They have the same vision I have for the students in my class, and we work as a team for the benefit of those students."* **Deborah Sanderson**



## DHSS Employee **Lana Cox** Goes Above and Beyond in All Aspects of Her Job

Lana Cox is employed with the Dept. of Health and Senior Services as a Senior Office Support Assistant (SOSA) in Joplin. There are so many positive things to say about Lana. Although she is based in Jasper, Lana answers the phones, does paperwork, sends emails and does whatever she can for anyone who needs her. Lana goes above and beyond in all aspects of her job, worries about clients and her co-workers, and truly cares and helps people in any situation. If you ask Lana to do something, it won't be very long before you get it right back. Even if the task is small, she wants to get it done as soon as possible. She is knowledgeable, and one of the best SOSAs in the Department.

*"I am fortunate to work with a group of very hard-working, compassionate individuals who believe that it takes a team effort to achieve positive results when encountering difficult situations at work."* **Lana Cox**



## OA/ITSD Employee **Travis Rehagen** is Improving Processes and Saving Resources

Travis Rehagen is the OA-ITSD team lead for End User Support (EUS) SharePoint projects, and was challenged to create an automated system to determine the closest available ITSD technician to direct for on-site service calls. The existing process was manual and time consuming, but working with other ITSD-EUS staff, a new automated solution was created that improves response time, saves staff time, eliminates errors and saves state resources in travel expenses. As evident in this project and others, Travis' knowledge and leadership skills are excellent. He is able to bring together staff from different functional areas with different skills to form a cohesive, productive team. He listens to others and is open to ideas and suggestions, and is passionate about finding solutions that are easy to use and can be quickly put into action.

*"Working on the End User Support Team requires that we put our customer's needs ahead of our own and everyone on our team sets a great example of this by doing everything they can to resolve customer's concerns in the quickest, most efficient way possible."*

## Take a minute to exercise

These days, with everyone so busy, it seems like a lot of us are using the old "no-time-to-exercise" excuse more than ever. But what if you could actually work out at work? While you won't get to the Olympics this way, you can do stretching, muscle-strengthening, and even short stints of aerobic exercises right at your desk (or maybe in a vacant conference room or stairwell). After all, doctors say any amount of exercise helps – the benefits are cumulative.

Here are a few quick and simple exercises to consider:

- ☐ Glance at the wall clock and do a minute's worth of "low impact" jumping jacks. Here's how it works: Raise your right arm and tap your left toe to the side while keeping your right foot on the floor; alternate sides.
- ☐ Do a football-like drill of running in place for 60 seconds. Get those knees up! (Beginners, march in place.)
- ☐ Do the office version of jumping rope for a minute. Simulate the arm motion of turning a rope, while alternately tapping the toes of each leg in front.
- ☐ While seated, pump both arms over your head for 30 seconds, then rapidly tap your feet on the floor (quietly please) for 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times.
- ☐ Walk during your lunch break. If you find that boring, bring your camera with you and take some pictures of architecture or your surroundings.
- ☐ Forget emailing the guy three cubes over – walk. And remember, walks to the vending machine don't count!



## Can You Define Your Attitude At Work?

One of the most important things anyone can do to increase their effectiveness and satisfaction at work is to actually define their attitude about work. Sound easy? Let's see.

According to *The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, **attitude** is defined as "a way of looking at life; a way of thinking, feeling or behaving."

If this is true, our attitude about work should be more than just what we think about work. It should also include the way we feel, and go about doing our work.

It doesn't matter if you've mapped out your career for the long haul, or given it much thought at all until now, if you don't define the attitude you intend to build your career upon, you may not be that pleased with your results on the job. That's why having a positive attitude about work can be so important.

If you want to define your attitude at work, the place to begin might be deciding what values will guide you in your work life.

Here are three to consider:

**Pride:** First, let's be clear. In this context, pride has nothing to do with arrogance, or having an inflated opinion about yourself. Here, the use of pride means having self-dignity.

Pride prevents you from doing just enough to get by. Truth be told, most people can do that. It's the extra effort that often makes the difference. If you know everything you do at work has your name and signature on it, at least symbolically, then hopefully you will give it your best, and nothing less.

**Passion:** Just a simple plain "interest" in any work or career you choose isn't enough to bring you through the tough times. You need to be passionate about being the best at what you do. It could be an angry customer, an impossible timeline, or seemingly constant change. Regardless of what you encounter, having an immense desire for all things worth doing will see you through even the most difficult of days.

**Belief:** In order to generate that passion, it is important to truly believe in what you are doing. Having a strong belief that your work is having a positive impact on someone else's life, even in the smallest of ways, will give you the fuel to charge ahead. Know that you can achieve all that you set out to do for yourself. You only need to start believing in yourself.

What positive attitude do you take towards your work? Write it down and begin practicing!

**"Doing your best at this moment puts you in the best place for the next moment."**

Oprah Winfrey



# 10 Tricks for a Fabulous Workday

Written by **Geoffrey James**

It takes just as much effort to have a wonderful day as it does to have a miserable one, so why not enjoy yourself? Want to have the best workday ever? It's not as difficult as you think.

These 10 tweaks to your everyday behavior will virtually guarantee you a day that's not just enjoyable, but allows you to get more done than you ever thought possible.

## **1. Start with 15 minutes of positive input.**

It's easier to achieve and maintain a positive attitude if you have a resource of positive thoughts in your mind to draw upon if the day doesn't go exactly as you planned. Start each day by reading (or listening to) an inspirational book to ensure that you have the resources you need.

## **2. Tie your work to your life's goals.**

Always remember that there's a deeper reason why you go to work, and do the work you do. Maybe it's to support your family, to change the world in some way, to help your customers, to make a difference. Whatever the deeper motivation, remind yourself that this workday—today—is the opportunity to accomplish part of that deeper and more important goal.

## **3. Use your commute wisely.**

Most people waste their commute time listening to the news or (worse, especially if they're driving) making calls, texting, or answering emails. Your commute time is the perfect time to get yourself pumped up for the day, and for many people, there's no better way to do this than to listen to music that truly inspires you and gets you in the right mood. And if you're able, don't depend on a DJ—make your own mixes!

## **4. Stick a smile on your face.**

If you followed the first three steps, maybe you're already smiling. If not, stick a smile on your face anyway. It doesn't even matter if it feels fake. Research has shown that even the most forced of smiles genuinely reduces stress and makes you happier. Does this mean you should be grinning like the Joker in the Batman comics? Well, maybe, if that's the best you can do. But something a bit more relaxed might be less alarming to your co-workers.

## **5. Express a positive mood.**

When most people are asked social greetings—questions like “How are you?” or “What's up?”—they typically say something neutral like, “I'm Okay,” or negative, like “Hangin' in there.” Unfortunately, that kind of talk can program your brain for failure. Instead, if anyone inquires, say something positive like: “Fantastic!” or “I'm having a good day!” It's true that some people are annoyed by things like this, but maybe those are people you should be avoiding anyway. (See No. 7.)

## **6. Do what's important first.**

Everybody complains about having too much to do, but few people do anything about it. That's why it's always important to remember the 80/20 Rule. If you haven't heard of it, it goes like this: 20% of your activities often produce 80% of your results. So, make an effort to do the 20% first (usually the most important stuff) before you get to the 80% of your activities that may not be quite as important. You'll get more done, and you'll get better results.

## **7. Avoid negative people.**

If you've been following Steps 1 through 6, you'll probably find that the most negative people in your orbit are already avoiding you, while the positive people will want to hang out with you and help you. Though it's true you can't avoid all the Debbie Downers, you can certainly find something else to do when they start grouching about stuff they won't or can't change.

## **8. Don't work long hours.**

Long hours are simply a bad idea. Long hours, after a short burst of productivity, actually make you less productive. But frankly, if you follow Steps 1 through 7, you'll be getting so much done that you won't need to work those long hours anyway.

## **9. Wind down and relax.**

Once you're done with the workday, fill the remainder of your hours with other activities that bring you joy and help you relax. The analogy of “sharpening the saw” is valid. Failing to take time to relax and stop thinking about work guarantees that you'll begin the next day with a “hangover” of resentment that will take the joy out of what can, and should be, a positive work experience.

## **10. End your day with 15 minutes of gratitude.**

As I pointed out in [“The True Secret of Success,”](#) exercising your “gratitude muscle” is the best way to make certain that you experience more success. Before you go to sleep, get out a tablet (paper or electric), and record everything that happened during the day about which you are (or could be) grateful. You'll sleep better and be ready for tomorrow—which will probably be even more fabulous than today.

This article was written by **Geoffrey James** and published in **INC.com**.  
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